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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: GERMAN AMBASSADOR ON FISCHER VISIT TO JORDAN:
MEPP, IRAQ, SYRIA

REF: AMMAN 8242 (NOTAL)

Classified By: Ambassador Edward W. Gnehm for Reasons 1.5 (b), (d)

KING TO FISCHER ON MEPP, IRAQ

1. (C) German Ambassador Martin Schneller briefed Ambassador and PolCouns December 17 on German FonMin Fischer's December 15 visit to Amman. Schneller said Fischer met with King Abdullah and Foreign Minister Marwan Muasher, who both delivered a consistent line on Iraq: we support Iraqi independence and the establishment of a sovereign Iraqi government, but the Coalition should not leave too soon, lest Iraq become unstable. On Middle East peace, Schneller said King Abdullah had expressed to Fischer great frustration with the Palestinian Authority and Yassir Arafat, whom he described as having "no strategic vision." Fischer argued to the Jordanians that all parties needed to take "small steps" to restore confidence, and to deal with the political aspects of the dispute.

... AND SYRIA

2. (S) Schneller said the King and Muasher spent a good deal of time making negative points on Syria. The King said Syrian President Bashar al-Assad remained in the grip of the old guard who surrounded his father, noting that there had been "no change in the political establishment" since Bashar came to power. The King also complained about increased infiltration of militants, arms, and explosives across the Syrian border into Jordan (bound for Israel, the West Bank, and, to a lesser extent, Iraq), as well as concern over the lack of Syrian control of the Syria-Iraq border. The King also blamed Syria partially for the failure of the recent Cairo meeting of Palestinian factions to reach agreement on a ceasefire.

COMMENT

3. (S) The King's points on the peace process and Iraq reflect the line the King has been taking with interlocutors. It strikes us as very useful that the Germans heard the King's negative views on Arafat. It is also interesting that the King chose to complain to Fischer about his increasing irritation with Syria (ref).

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GNEHM